

Peer Helper: On My Schedule and In My Heart

On my high school campus, there is an underrepresented community of special needs students who sometimes feel out of place and unwelcomed. Many of these students have trouble fitting in with the majority and are often left feeling alone and unheard. The Peer Helper class at Davis Senior High gives students firsthand experience working with these special needs students who need help to communicate, to do math calculations or just to socialize. From my experience working as a Peer Helper, I see these students open up rapidly and show their true and vibrant personalities when they realize that I really want to get to know them. It makes me happy to know that these ordinarily quiet peers of mine get excited to say "hi" to me and start a conversation when we see each other around campus!

If I had the ability to change my school in a positive way, I would help make sure that the Peer Helper class and other similar classes are well publicized to incoming and current high school students. If students had more of an awareness about the Peer Helper classes, our student body would be more connected with each other. If there were more opportunities and resources for all students to connect with one another, there wouldn't be such a feeling of isolation for some of these students within our community. These are some of the steps I would take to get more of the student body involved in this class:

- Recruit classmates to put up posters around campus to promote the class
- Tell friends about the class by promoting the altruistic benefits of being a Peer Helper
- Use Davis Senior High's popular social media outlets to promote the class
- Develop a promotional video presentation and post it on the "Blue Devil Pride Network"
- Write an article for "The Hub" - the student created news source for Davis Sr. High

Before I enrolled in the Peer Helper class, I didn't even know there was such a class. I only found it while reviewing the high school course catalog. I just assumed I would mainly be tutoring kids that needed help with homework. It turned out to be much more rewarding than I ever thought it would be and I made new friends that I never would have seen around campus otherwise. One of my favorite parts of being a Peer Helper is when the class goes outdoors to play a sport. The most popular sports that the class enjoys are soccer and tennis. A chance to be active always brings a smile to the students' faces. I bring out my competitive spirit to drive up the energy and fun of the games. Inside the classroom, I really enjoy helping my peers with several topics of study. Seeing their drive to learn truly inspires me. These students overcome many obstacles and I believe that their ability to persevere can inspire our whole student body to be kind to each other and show compassion to all our classmates.

School should be a place of inclusivity where everyone is free to talk about their hobbies and build on their future goals. Each student in my Peer Helper class has a different and unique personality. One student, who has such a positive and loving nature, hugs his peers while he walks into the classroom. Another is always quiet but so dedicated and determined to get his schoolwork done. One student is into heavy metal, while others are into plants or food. They always love to talk about their passions and that is what school should be about. Some of these students want to be musicians or go into finance, and I support them and cheer on their goals. If more high school students were to enroll as a Peer Helper, they would open themselves up to a new perspective on student life and find that these kids are capable of so much and have such bright futures ahead of them. I have known all my life that I wanted to have a future where I would work with kids in need. This Peer Helper class has only furthered my desire to accomplish this goal of mine.